

Friis, John

From: Ian Carlson [icarlson@breweredu.org]
Sent: Sunday, March 15, 2009 11:47 AM
To: Friis, John
Cc: eca_pace@yahoo.com; losanum@gmail.com
Subject: HB6666, Section 5

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Ian Carlson and I am an alumni of the Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven. I attended ECA as a freshman in high school for the visual arts. I was a scholarship student from the Milford School District. Today I teach creative writing, English and art history at a public high school in Maine. It was recently brought to my attention that ECA is in jeparody of closing due to two issues brought before the state government. As both a practicing artist and public school educator, I would ask any legislator involed with this issue to consider the thousands of students lives (over the 30+ year span) who have been shaped by this truly extraordinary school. If ECA were to close it would be not only a huge blow to the idea of the necessity of art in schools, but to all of the young people who have found a purpose and inspiration in this truly unique environment.

At the age of 14-15 I was able to take photography and drawing classes which were not offered at my traditional high school (Joseph A. Foran) and I was also able to take electives in other fields, like creative writing, which planted the seeds for my own eventual growth into a high school English/creative writing teacher.

It is also worth noting that while I eventually returned to my traditional high school full-time, no class or program had a greater impact on who I would become. While the teachers of art and writing at my high school were fine educators, their were not praticing artists. That in itself made a huge difference for my colleagues and I who attended ECA and hoped to become artists ourselves. At ECA I can recall taking photography from a former National Geographic photographer whose technical knowledge, coupled with his years of in-field experience provided for an educational experience that a full-time "professional" teacher (right out of a state-certified teacher-prep program) could not provide. While my teachers at ECA may not have been state-certified, their expertise was unrivaled...and at the end of the day that is the kind of teacher everyone wants, the one with the content knowledge and experience (not necessarily with the state-approved diploma). For most of us, ECA was not just more school...but what we did in high school. If we were the varsity letter jacket types we would've wanted "ECA" embroidered on the back. ECA was who we were in high school, much like the student athlete or student government member, we were student-artists and our "coaches" were the best at what they did...whether they were state-certified or not.

As a professional who works with adolescents everyday, I can tell you that the most important part of their lives is developing their own identity. For many young people ECA has been a beacon of light in the otherwise foggy haze of boredom that is the traditional high school experience. So many students who would have otherwise slipped through the cracks as completely disengaged students were given motivation, support, and most importantly hope, in one of the most difficult growing periods in their lives.

I hope that ECA can remain open for years to come as place for students with a passion for the arts to find themselves. The continued support of ECA from the state shows not only a commitment to the arts, but more importantly, to all the future artists who begin their lives there.

Sincerely,

Ian Carlson
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